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FOR EUR, EUR/SCE

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SUBJECT: CROATIAN PM NOT OPTIMISTIC ABOUT USG HOPES FOR BOSNIAN CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

REF: A. STATE 22980

[¶](#)B. 06 ZAGREB 1423  
[¶](#)C. 06 ZAGREB 1439

Classified By: CDA Greg Delawie for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[¶](#)11. (C) Ambassador and DCM met March 2 with PM Ivo Sanader to discuss the way ahead on Bosnian constitutional reform, promoting the existing package of US-brokered reform measures as laid out in ref A.

[¶](#)12. (C) Sanader said the USG-supported revisions would not succeed and would be a divisive element in BiH. They were a mistake for both strategic and tactical reasons. On the strategic level, if the position of Croats in Bosnia is weakened, the influence of the international community is weakened as well. He noted negatively the growing influence of Russia in BiH, especially in the RS, which has recently sold the Bosanski Brod refinery, a motor oil plant, and a telecommunications company to Russian interests.

[¶](#)13. (C) BiH Croats are essential to preserving BiH as a multi-ethnic state, he continued. If they feel their influence slipping further they will abandon BiH and move to Croatia (Note: where they can claim citizenship), leaving behind only Serbs and Bosniaks. There will be no way to keep the BiH as a unitary state if the BiH Croats forsake the country; another mass influx of BiH Croats to Croatia would be very destabilizing for Croatia as well.

[¶](#)14. (C) On a tactical level, Sanader said, the Catholic church and the HDZ 1990 faction clearly oppose the existing reform package, giving it no chance of succeeding. He said he could try to argue with them but it would be pointless since their minds are made up and his pushing would be ineffective on this issue.

[¶](#)15. (C) Finally, engaging the BiH Croats on a losing issue like this, Sanader said, would reduce his influence in the region, and thus his ability to help encourage positive change not just in BiH but in the region as a whole. Sanader asked again that we consider the two changes to the package proposed by the HDZ 1990, reported in refs B and C.

[¶](#)16. (C) Comment: We continue to believe that, despite such disagreements, engaging with the GOC on Bosnia reform issues will serve our interests.

DELAWEIE